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Report of responses to a questionnaire to determine student attitudes toward the proposed Bard experiment in offcampus independent study. The questionnaire survey, conducted prior to the initiation of the experiment, revealed that student reactions were highly unfavorable. (See also: "Evaluation of an Experiment in Off-Campus Independent Study at Bard College," listed under category 14, which reports on student attitudes at Bard both before undertaking independent study and following the first field period.)

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" STUDENT OPINION "

The following is a tabulation of the results of the questionnaire completed by students and concerning the proposed academic changes at Bard: (108 forms were returned)

1. Would the 4-Quarter Plan be acceptable to you as a student? YES-14; NO-83

2. If you were to choose a college, would you choose a college with such a 4Quarter Plan (w ich includes one quarter of independent study at home)? YES-3; NO-98

3. If ou had to work independently for a semester, would you rather work at home or at Bard? BARD-92; HOME-6

4. Do you feel that it is essential for your academic work and growth to be in contact with professors and augment your reading with conferences or classes? YES-96; NO-6

5. Do you think your contact with professors may be considered to be 'spoon-feeding"? YES-1; NO-102

6. Are there factors in your home situation that would hamper your academic work? YES-69; NO-19

7. Is there a suitable library near your home? YES-49; NO-52

8. Do you feel that contact with other students is important for your academic work? YES-103; NO-4

9. Do you feel that isolation from an academic community will hinder your work? YE S-100; NO-3

10. Would you be willing to have a full-time academic pr gram during the summer months? YES-30; NO-71

11. According to the following criteria, rate a regular semester's work at Bard and independent academic work at home.

a) Amount of work covered:

At Bard--									
Very Poor	0	Unfavourable	2	Fair	6	Good	48	Excellent	39
At home--									
Very Poor	25	Unfavourable	37	Fair	25	Good	5	Excellent	3

b) Depth in understanding work:

At Bard--									
Very Poor	1	Unfavourable	0	Fair	2	Good	55	Excellent	46
At home--									
Very Poor	6	Unfavourable	29	Fair	38	Good	10	Excellent	1

7200

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c) Scope of ideas:

At Bard--									
Very Poor	2	Unfavorable	1	Fair	4	Good	42	Excellent	44
At home--									
Very Poor	27	Unfavorable	27	Fair	21	Good	11	Excellent	4

d) Stimulation for original thinking:

At Bard--									
Very Poor	1	Unfavorable	2	Fair	5	Good	32	Excellent	55
At home--									
Very Poor	24	Unfavorable	30	Fair	21	Good	12	Excellent	3

e) Interest in academic work:

At Bard--									
Very Poor	1	Unfavorable	1	Fair	3	Good	35	Excellent	54
At home--									
Very Poor	28	Unfavorable	26	Fair	25	Good	7	Excellent	5

Question eleven was left unanswered by a large number of students because of its unacceptable form. However, those answered have been compiled according to a point system from 0 to 100:
Very Poor = 0; Unfavorable = 25; Fair = 50; Good = 75; Excellent = 100

a) Amount of work covered:

At Bard -- Score 82 (between good and excellent)
At home -- Score 30 (between unfavorable and fair)

b) Depth in understanding work:

At Bard -- Score 84 (between good and excellent)
At home -- Score 41 (between unfavorable and fair)

c) Scope of ideas:

At Bard -- Score 84 (between good and excellent)
At home -- Score 33 (between unfavorable and fair)

d) Stimulation for original thinking:

At Bard -- Score 86 (between good and excellent)
At home -- Score 33 (between unfavorable and fair)

e) Interest in academic work:

At Bard -- Score 87 (between good and excellent)
At home -- Score 32 (between unfavorable and fair)

Fixty-six students gave additional comments on the questionnaires. Although the question of transfer was not included, fifteen students explicitly expressed their intention to leave Bard if the 4-Quarter Plan were instituted.

The following opinions were, in essence, repeatedly expressed by the students who commented on their questionnaires:

"There's a time durin one's formal education when one should work in continuously close contact with professors: this is the crucial guidance period. Moreover, the adjustment from home to Bard is difficult enough as it is. It is not easy to settle down to the routine after the summer; the new system would make this even harder. The caliber of most students accepted by Bard might be as low as the poorest students now, since people will apply who, instead of wanting a complete four-year education, would be satisfied with a combined work-and-three-year education. Besides, part of the value of attending an out-of-city college is the opportunity for adjustment overa long period of time to the social environment, to form and develop relationships. This is every student's need and right." (30 students.)

"The proposed plan would not have the same advantages as the present system. The objection is that besides the fear that the quality of education would decline, the tuition under the new plan remains the same. It is possible to get course outlines and readin lists from any library for home study (even if you do not want to sink so low as to take T.V. courses), and we do not feel that it is nece sary to pay the same amount of money for less direct instruction." (25 students.)

"It is impossible for me to live at home and economically impossible for me to live away from home without havin a job, with the result that my academic work dwindles. Thus, although I might be doing some independent work, it will be slight because of the number of hours I would be working for a salary, getting meals, and travelling." (15 students).

"The only new features of the quarterly plan is twenty percent less education, and this education now becomes fragmentized, disoriented, incomplete and superficial." (15 students.)

"Independent projects might be fine, but consider the ones in the fields of drama, dance, music and art where the development of ideas is the main purpose. Or take mathematics: what if you complete the first draft only to discover at your one and only precious conference that one step in the proof on pa e five is invalid? This means that the entire project, (from page five on) must be completely rewritten (in three weeks.)"..."The 4-Quarter Plan will ruin everything that's good about Bard. It completely ignores any students in any of the arts. Where can you study piano, etc., during the three months you're not here? Where can you study dance or acting? No school will take you for three months and then let you go back to college...This plan may make money, but it is a compromise in terms of education." (10 students)

"Conferences, far from being crutches, are essential for learning to work independently." (10 students)

Additional comments written by the students include the following:

In regard to the first question(Would the 4-Quarter Plan be acceptable to you as a student?) : "I am sorry this is happening--if I choose to return it would be in spite of the 4-Quarter Plan and because of the students, the teachers, the conferences, and the seminars."

As answers to the fourth question(Do you feel that it is essential for your academic work and growth to be in contact with professors and augment your reading with conferences or classes?) "Absolutely essential. If I didn't think so, I would leave school, and study alone all the time." "Depends on circumstances -- e.g, my advisor did not do my project, but the knowledge that he could be consulted in emergency was comforting."

As answers to question six (Are there factors in your home situation that would hamper your academic work?): "Too many distractions." "Yes- they don't qualify as professors, and that's what I need! (reffering to parents).

A typical answer to the eighth question (Do you feel that contact with other students is important for your academic work?): "Yes. Much of what I have learned outside of classes has been from other students -- in approach, method and in discussions. "

As criticism on both the ninth question(Do you feel that isolation from an academic community will hinder your work?) and the proposed plan: "Isolation is not synonymous with independence."

A question put to number ten (Would you be willing to have a full-time academic program during the summer months?): "in lieu of?"

"Most of these are ridiculous question. The purpose of the survey is fine, however, because however inadequately, it expresses what the students generally feel."

"The 4-Quarter system demands more time at home which in turn demands more money."

"Do painters and musicians switch teachers or fumble along until they come back, and their teachers spend half a term giving them some kind of direction to begin where they left off?"

"In four years at Bard, I've gotten too much from talking to students to discount this experience as superfluous. My work with my advisor has been absolutely essential for my intellectual growth. The level of my advisor-stimulated senior project cannot be termed spoon-feeding in any way. The field period is an intellectual environment only to be described as a vacuum in which I have found it necessary in the past to work at jobs for money rather than intellectual gain."

"During my field period I read very diligently, but its value was diminished as I didn't understand the material -- so I later discovered in conferences with my advisor."

"At Western Reserve U., from where I transferred to Bard, classes were spoon-fed, if you want to call it that. We went it, sat down, and opened the mouths of our brain, and were either forced to take in what the instructor said, or failed. We had no choice regardin what was said in lectures. When it was over, we left... I am amazed that this plan ever came into being. I am sorry to see Bard end this way, and it will if you continue pursuing this plan which seems to be initiated from some sort of financial problem."

"I am sorry to see this happen to Bard. There are so few places which offer an education in the true sense, and now if this plan goes into effect, Bard will be the worst offender of all."

"The experiment in progre ssive education which Bard has undertaken has gone far. Within an academic framework such as the present one, it could go farther. However, when that academic framework is forfeited (as it is in the Quarter system), the student is no longing seeking to relate academic ideas to a modern world through a "field experience", but instead relates a fantasy of experiences to a watered down academic program."

"We've got something here -- the Bard program -- and I think at present it's pretty wonderful. Is it worth while to get a lot of money next yea for a program that will drive away any student who is at present committed to the ideals we are now proclaiming?"

"From a foreign student: "I think that I am lucky that I shall graduate in six months. It would be awfully inconvenient for me if the 4-Quarter Plan were put into effect, and I were not to graduate so soon."

"An educational system such as the proposed plan, with a continuously changing student body, would destroy what may now be called the Bard Community.

From a graduating senior: "The educational system at Bard is unique and priceless insofar as it offers warm personal contact between student and teacher. Far from emphasizing depedency on the part of the student, it has stimulated emotional and academic growth resulting as proven in an above average capacity for original and creative thinking. Any plan, even one with increased classes, would be preferable to the proposed one of reduced residence and thus reduced contact. Better no Bard, than one in conflict with its own ideals!= "

The concerted opinion of the students in regard to these questions needs no comment. More important t an the criticisms of the proposed 4-Quarter Plan are the many comments that state explicitly the aspects of Bard which are most valuable and must not be lost. It is only hoped that further action by the faculty and administration will be taken in the light of the students' opinions and interests.

Submitted by Jerry Liss

PHL:jjl

(The original questionnaire was devised by Amy Green, David Robison and Jerry Liss. This report was compiled by Claudia Auerbach, Phillip Liss and Jerry Liss. Jane Jaffe, Johanna Kramer, David Robison and Dick Gummere, Jr. assisted in the statistical tabulation.)